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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 1, 2006

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The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld,

I write to you today as the Ranking Member of the Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee to request that you convene a task force to assess possible solutions to a growing problem in Iraq: insurgent snipers. Our brave men and women in Iraq have selflessly volunteered to serve our country, and we are duty-bound to protect them as best we can.

The tactics used by the insurgents have been flexible and adaptive to counter our significant technological advantages, and in many instances we have been slow to respond appropriately. This asymmetric strategy of warfare was and is typified by the insurgents' use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). As you know, IEDs have decimated our unarmored vehicle fleet and killed hundreds of soldiers. The Department of Defense (DoD) responded by creating the Joint IED Task Force, which became the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO).

As our own tactics have changed in Iraq to respond to asymmetric threats, like IEDs, the insurgents have adjusted as well. The past few months have seen a drastic rise in U.S. fatalities as a result of small arms fire, including insurgent snipers. Data indicates that small arms fire accounted for 19.7% of American fatalities in April of 2006 while in October that number had ballooned to 43%.

This is clearly a threat that needs to be addressed. I understand that certain preliminary actions have been taken to address this threat, such as deploying 100 of BBN Technologies's Boomerang II systems in Iraq and investing money in RedOwl, developed at Boston University. These shooter detection systems can be deployed on vehicles or in stationary locations. The preliminary reports from the field that I have heard have been very positive regarding the Boomerang II system.

The rapid deployment of this and next generation systems, and the continued investment in new technologies and tactics, seems necessary for our force protection.

effort. I strongly encourage you to convene a task force to assess the insurgent sniper problem fully and to devise a set of solutions based upon new technologies and tactics.

If you, or your staff, have any questions feel free to contact either myself or Jesse Klempner of my staff at (202) 225-3411. Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Marty Meehan
Member of Congress